

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 10129 030704Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2669

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL LAHORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION IN FRONTIER WELCOMES KHAR'S
EMERGENCE AS PRIME MINISTER'S OPPONENT
IN PUNJAB

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL PESHAWAR:

1. POLITICAL LEADERS AND OBSERVERS IN NWFP HAVE BEEN
CLOSELY WATCHING EVENTS IN LAHORE SINCE EMERGENCE OF
FORMER GOVERNOR AND CHIEF MINISTER MUSTAFA KHAR AS
PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S MAIN OPPONENT IN PUNJAB.

2. DEVELOPMENTS THERE DURING PAST MONTH HAVE HAD
CONSIDERABLE IMPACT WITHIN RANKS OF FRONTIER OPPOSITION.
LEADERS OF DEFUNCT NAP BELIEVE THAT PRIME MINISTER'S
POSITION HAS BEEN MARKEDLY ERODED BY KHAR'S CHALLENGE,
ARE CONFIDENT THAT KHAR'S NEW POLITICAL MOVEMENT WILL
GAIN IN STRENGTH AND POPULARITY IN MONTHS AHEAD, AND ARE
PREDICTING BHUTTO'S DOWNFALL WITHIN NEXT YEAR OR TWO. WHILE
SUCH OPTIMISM MAY BE DISMISSED AS WISHFUL THINKING, IT IS
QUITE APPARENT TO CONSULATE THAT OPPOSITION HAS BEEN

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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 10129 030704Z

GIVEN TREMENDOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST BY RECENT DEVELOP-

MENTS AND HAS ACQUIRED RENEWED CONFIDENCE THAT BATTLE AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER WILL EVENTUALLY BE WON. AS EVIDENCE OF NAP'S NEWLY-ENHANCED POSITION, ONE OF TWO MPA'S WHO LEFT NAP TO JOIN PPP IN SEPTEMBER IS NOW ASKING TO BE READMITTED TO THE PARTY.

3. FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, NAP LEADERS IN FRONTIER BELIEVE THAT KHAR IS WELL SUITED TO BE MAJOR OPPONENT OF PRIME MINISTER. FIRST OF ALL, THEY REALIZE THAT IF BHUTTO IS EVER TO BE OUSTED FROM POWER, MAJOR INITIATIVE MUST OF NECESSITY COME FROM PUNJAB. SECONDLY, THEY BELIEVE THAT KHAR HAS NECESSARY STAYING POWER TO CONDUCT CAMPAIGN AGAINST BHUTTO OVER LONG PERIOD OF TIME. (THEY DO NOT THINK BHUTTO WILL RISK PUNJABI WRATH BY JAILING HIM.) THIRDLY, AS FORMER HATCHET MAN FOR PRIME MINISTER, KHAR IS KNOWN TO BE TOUGH, GUTSY, RESOURCEFUL, AND CAPABLE OF CARRYING OUT EFFECTIVE AGITATIONAL CUM GOONDA POLITICS AGAINST HIS LATE MENTOR.

4. DESPITE KHAR'S "PUNJAB FIRST" PHILOSOPHY, NAP LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THEY HAVE NO IDEOLOGICAL SCRUPLES ABOUT COOPERATING WITH HIM TO FACILITATE OVERTHROW OF PRIME MINISTER. THEY ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS, HOWEVER, THAT NWFP (OR BALUCHISTAN) WOULD BENEFIT BY HAVING KHAR TAKE POWER IN COUNTRY. THEY WANT KHAR TO JOIN THE UDF COALITION OPPOSITION, BUT THEY WILL TRY TO PREVENT HIM FROM ASSUMING LEADERSHIP OF UDF.

5. EMERGENCE OF KHAR AS MAJOR OPPOSITION LEADER IS ALSO BEGINNING TO HAVE ITS REPERCUSSIONS WITHIN FRONTIER PPP. AT LEAST TWO PPP MPA'S NOW APPEAR LIKELY TO BREAK AWAY FROM PARTY ALTOGETHER AND FORM A PRO-KHAR BLOC WITHIN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY. A NUMBER OF OTHER MPA'S WHO ARE UNHAPPY WITH LEADERSHIP OF NASRULLAH KHATTAK ARE ALSO REPORTEDLY TRYING TO EXPLOIT PPP FEAR OF KHAR TO OBTAIN INCREASED FINANCIAL BENEFITS FROM REGIME IN RETURN FOR CONTINUED LOYALTY.

6. COMMENT: SUPREME COURT'S LONG-EXPECTED OCTOBER 30 DECISION CONFIRMING GOVERNMENT'S BAN OF NAP IS NOT LIKELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 10129 030704Z

TO LESSEN FRONTIER OPPOSITION'S DETERMINATION TO CARRY ON STRUGGLE AGAINST PRIME MINISTER OR TO DIMINISH ITS OPTIMISM REGARDING HIS LIKELY DOWNFALL.
BYROADE

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